

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

MATTHEW MCDERMOTT,

Plaintiff,

- against -

SALEM MEDIA GROUP, INC.

Defendant.

Docket No. 4:20-cv-97

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Matthew McDermott (“McDermott” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant Salem Media Group, Inc. (“Salem Media Group” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of First lady Chirlane McCray, owned and registered by McDermott, a professional photographer. Accordingly, McDermott seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides and/or transacts business in Texas.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

### **PARTIES**

5. McDermott is a professional photographer in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at 23-38 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, 2F, Astoria, New York 11105.

6. Upon information and belief, Salem Media Group is a domestic business corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Texas, with a place of business at 6400 North Belt Line Road, Suite 220, Irving, Texas 75063. Upon information and belief, Salem Media Group is registered with the Texas Department of Corporations to do business in Texas. At all times material, hereto, Salem Media Group has owned and operated a website at the URL: [www.RedState.com](http://www.RedState.com) (the “Website”).

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

#### **A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph**

7. McDermott photographed First lady Chirlane McCray, (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. McDermott is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

10. The Photograph was registered with the United States Copyright Office and was given registration number VA 2-186-291.

#### **B. Defendant’s Infringing Activities**

11. Salem Media Group ran an article on the Website entitled *NY Mayor Bill de Blasio’s Wife Reaches Out to ‘LGBTQI’ Youth and Reminds Them She Used to be a Lesbian*.

See: <https://www.redstate.com/alexparker/2019/10/08/ny-mayor-bill-de-blasios-wife-reaches->

[lgbtqi-youth-reminds-used-lesbian/](#). The article featured the Photograph. A true and correct copy of the Photograph on the article and a screenshot of the Photograph on the Website are attached hereto as Exhibit B.

12. Salem Media Group did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its article, nor did Salem Media Group have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

13. Salem Media Group has a history of using Plaintiff's photographs without permission. In 2017, Plaintiff sued Salem Media Group for using another one of his photographs without permission. See: *McDermott v. Salem Media Group, Inc.* (1:17-cv-9690-GBD)

**CLAIM FOR RELIEF**  
**(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST SALEM MEDIA GROUP)**  
**(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)**

14. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-13 above.

15. Salem Media Group infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Salem Media Group is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

16. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

17. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Salem Media Group have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

18. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

19. Alternatively, Plaintiff is entitled to statutory damages up to \$150,000 per work infringed for Defendant's willful infringement of the Photograph, pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(c).

20. Plaintiff further is entitled to his attorney's fees and full costs pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505.

#### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Salem Media Group be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. Plaintiff be awarded either: a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per copyrighted work infringed pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504;
3. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
4. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505;
5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and

6. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York  
February 5, 2020

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